

ILLINOIS EPA NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AGREEMENT REACHED ON TEMPORARY DIOXIN CONTAINMENT PLAN

SPRINGFIELD, IL., May 13, 1983 ----- Agreement has been reached on a temporary containment plan for dioxin contaminated soil at the South Mobile Avenue site of the main pump station for the new regional wastewater treatment plant in Sauget.

The plan calls for removing the contaminated soils from the actual construction area into specially designed temporary storage cells on the site. The dioxin laden material will be held in these cells until a final determination can be made on permanent disposal. At the same time, additional sampling and analysis will be carried out to confirm the depth of contaminated soils and the area involved.

"This plan, while temporary, will contain the material in an environmentally sound manner which will guarantee the safety and welfare of workers in the area and the general public," Richard J. Carlson, director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, said.

Agreement on the plan was reached Thursday by representatives of the Village of Sauget, the IEPA, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at a meeting in Sauget. The plan is based on a proposal recently presented by Sauget officials.

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"I want to congratulate everyone involved in these discussions, especially USEPA Region V, for reaching agreement in such a relatively short time. At the same time I remind everyone that this is a temporary not a final solution to the problem. Final disposition is still to be determined and we are doing everything in our power to arrive at a permanent resolution of this problem," Carlson, said.

Village Mayor Paul Sauget said, "Construction on the site will not resume until this plan is implemented and we are assured a program for worker safety is completed by the construction company and in force."

Material from an area at least 100 feet long by 100 feet wide by 2-1/2 feet deep will be removed and stored on-site temporarily in special containment cells. These cells will consist of an enclosed leachate collection system at the bottom and layers of clay and hypalon synthetic liners to encapsulate the material. Activated carbon will be included to absorb contamination in the cells. Finally a layer of top soil and vegetation will cover the cells as a final protective measure.

Related to this, representatives of the IEPA have agreed to meet with the Rev. Buck Jones of Project HOPE and citizens of Rush City at 2 P.M., May 19 in the Rush City Community Hall to explain the remedial actions being taken.

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Sauget Toxin Leak Spurs Check Of Mississippi

By Bill Lambrecht

Post-Dispatch Illinois Bureau

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SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Federal environmental officials are checking to determine whether the Mississippi River is threatened by a toxic waste landfill at Sauget in the Metro East area, where trace amounts of dioxin were discovered among leaking chemicals, the Post-Dispatch learned.

Dioxin and larger concentrations of other industrial chemicals were identified in tests by Monsanto Co. of St. Louis, owner of the landfill, the company acknowledged this week.

Dioxin is a contaminant byproduct of herbicides such as those produced at

Monsanto's W.G. Krummrich plant nearby.

It is highly toxic, and received wide attention as a byproduct of the Agent Orange defoliant used in the Vietnam War and as one of the chemicals in Love Canal at Niagara Falls, N.Y. But the Love Canal dioxin was roughly a thousand times stronger than that found at Sauget, which is across the river from south St. Louis.

Last November at Sauget, government inspectors in masks and protective clothing took samples of leaking chemicals. Six weeks earlier, Illinois state inspectors had noticed pungent chemicals seeping from the ground.

Tests of the samples were to be done by both Monsanto and the federal Environmental Protection Agency, but federal testing is not finished. The Illinois attorney general's office also joined the investigation last week.

Tests for Monsanto were returned last month from the Environmental Analytical Services Center in Dayton, Ohio. They showed "extremely low levels of dioxin in the parts per trillion," said Sarah Collins, spokeswoman for Monsanto.

"We don't believe that the situation poses a hazard to people's health or the environment," Ms. Collins said.

Other industrial chemicals were shown in parts per billion, she said. The

company declined to provide specific results until informing officials at the U.S. and Illinois Environmental Protection Agencies of the findings. Government officials had not been told as of late Tuesday.

Records of state inspection reports from tests of monitoring wells there last spring showed phenols in concentrations as high as 13,000 parts per billion and benzene compounds as high as 3,000 parts per billion. Both are moderately toxic substances used commonly in chemical manufacturing.

Kenneth R. Mensing, the state EPA's land pollution chief in Southern Illinois, said that he feels a "a sense of

See CHEMICALS, Page 20

Chemicals

FROM PAGE ONE

urgency" regarding the leaking chemicals at Sauget. No action was planned at least until the sampling at the federal level was done.

"We're at the point where we've identified a problem, and we're waiting for test results to see what that problem is," Mensing said.

"We're not just going to sit and watch this stuff leak into the river."

A federal EPA attorney, Kathleen Buttolph, said that agency's test results were expected any day. She said that a meeting would be scheduled with Monsanto when the findings are known.

"We have a fair idea that they are polluting the Mississippi River, based on what the Illinois EPA has told us. But we can't say 'stop polluting' until we know what is there," Ms. Buttolph said.

The Sauget landfill was one of four sites in the Metro East area and 28 throughout the state nominated by the Illinois EPA recently as candidates for the federal Superfund — a \$1.6 billion trust fund approved in 1980 to clean up old toxic waste sites. But that money is tied up for lack of federal rules on how to use it.

Illinois officials said they would seek a cleanup of the Sauget landfill, if necessary, even without the federal money. One state lawyer noted that enforcement is often more easily obtained against large companies "with deep pockets" than when dealing with abandoned sites.

Illinois Attorney General Tyrone C. Fahner became involved in the Sauget investigation last week after learning it was a candidate for the Superfund. He sued this month to force the federal EPA to release Superfund money.

Fahner said: "We know of the seepage at the Monsanto facility, and we intend to find out how bad it is. We feel that it is something that should be dealt with quickly."

An engineer from Fahner's Chicago office was sent to Springfield on

Tuesday to examine state EPA records relating to the Sauget landfill.

Monsanto capped the landfill with clay material in 1978, four years after the company had stopped dumping there. From 1958-74, it served as a repository for a variety of chemical manufacturing wastes.

During that time, chemical wastes often were dumped in bulk, a state inspector said. Today, such waste is usually buried in drums.

Monsanto's Krummrich plant converts about 80 raw chemicals into about 40 chemical products from herbicides to dyes, the company spokeswoman said.

Another landfill a short distance to the east was identified by a congressional subcommittee two years ago as the site where Monsanto dumped thousands of tons of toxic chemicals from 1950 to about 1973. It is not now under review by federal authorities.

Environmental officials declined to speculate on potential dangers posed by the leaking landfill or what steps could be taken to clean up the site.

One official said he was concerned about a "sponge effect," in which high waters could soak the materials from the ground, then carry them down river.

The nearest community in Illinois using the Mississippi River for drinking water is Chester, 70 miles south of Sauget. Cape Girardeau, 65 miles down the river from Chester, is the closest Missouri community south to use Mississippi River water.

Of the chemicals discovered at Sauget, dioxin is by far the most dangerous. For example, a study published in 1979 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services showed that 0.08 parts per trillion of dioxin killed 50 percent of the mice that ingested the chemical. Half of the mice in another test died when their skin came in contact with 0.114 parts per trillion.